



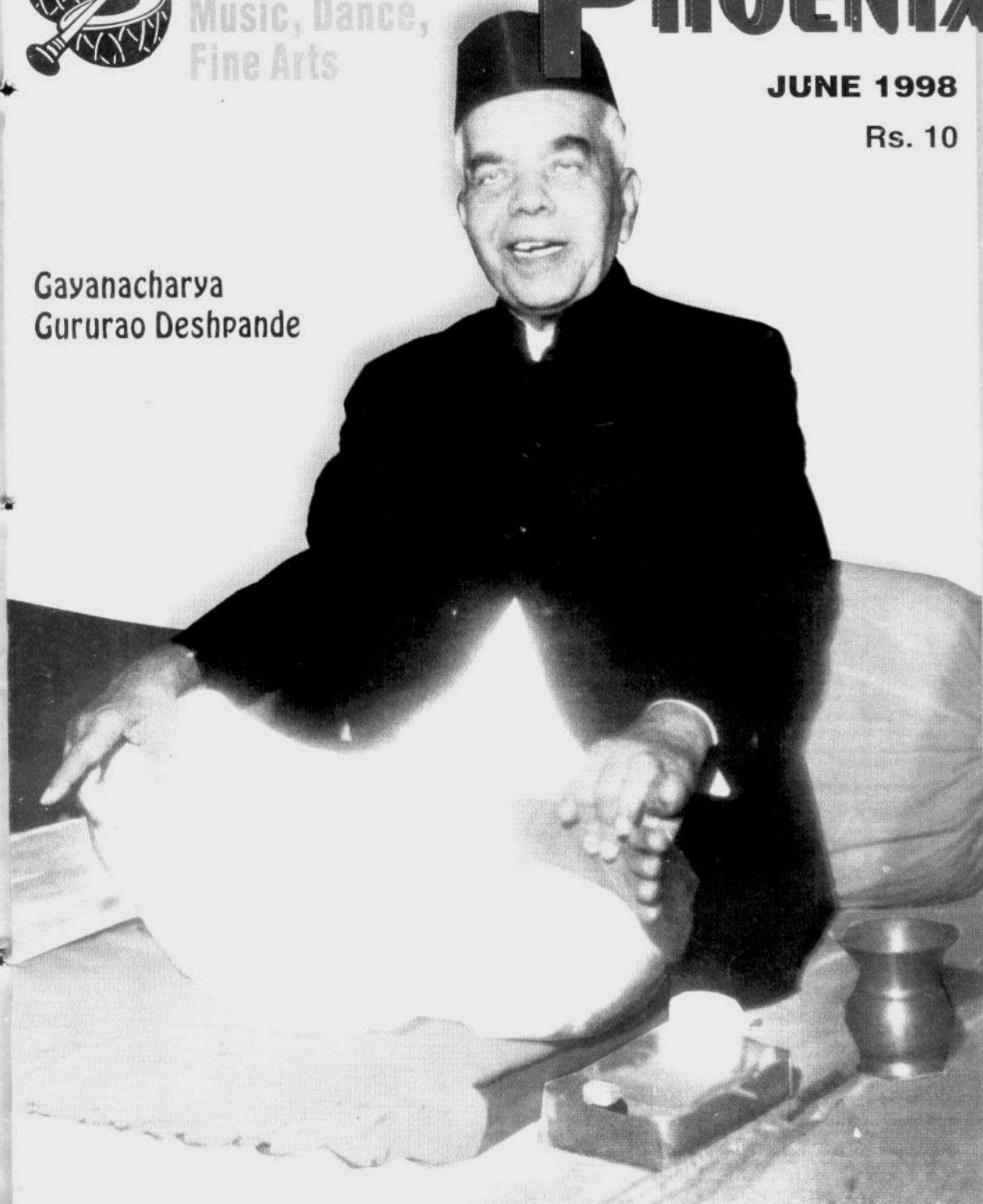
Journal on  
Music, Dance,  
Fine Arts

# PHOENIX

JUNE 1998

Rs. 10

Gayanacharya  
Gururao Deshpande



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## From the Editor

*As our readers will have observed, a new column on fine arts has been introduced from the March issue. It fulfills a long-felt need as many well-wishers and friends of the journal had suggested that it would be worthwhile to bring fine arts also into the its ambit.*

*The columnist Pramila Lochan is a young, fully qualified art historian with a flair for journalism. To boot, she is a trained vocalist in the Hindustani style, attributes that make her ideally suited for the task ahead of Phoenix. We hope this move will be welcome to the readers who after all are the final arbiters in all such matters.*

*Manu Vijay, a senior dancer of the City and one who had become familiar with our readers with her spicy write-ups is also slated to join the fold. The duo should definitely be able to give the magazine a youthful flavour!*

*Meanwhile, a long-time friend B.S.S. Rao of Mysore, while welcoming the "resurrection" has sought "a comprehensive coverage of Karnataka's cultural centres, instead of a single window on the capital". His concern is understandable, though from the beginning, the coverage was never intended to be confined to the City. As it has been repeatedly made clear, the journal's canvas is wide and encompasses not only the cultural centres of Karnataka, but also all its people spread the world over. That was the focus of our erstwhile contributors too, and it will remain so hereafter. All that we on this side expect is that, without standing on formalities, those who are interested in art and culture keep sending notes on the events in their own sphere. They will certainly receive due attention. That is assured.*

*Together, it would be appreciated if efforts are also made towards making the fledgeling journal self-supporting!*



## Uma Continuing the Kalakshetra Tradition

K. Raghavendra Rao

Singleminded devotion, commensurate hard-work and perseverance are a must for an artiste. Being born in fortuitous circumstances gives the initial start, when destiny itself seems to take over and give the right direction and requisite momentum. More so in the field of dance, which is probably the most demanding of fine arts. Uma Rao is a product of such background of artistic sensibility, choice tutelage and rigorous discipline.

Uma was born in an art-loving family of Bellur in Mandya Dist. Her sisters are musicians, popularly known as Bellur Sisters. The great poet Prof. B.M. Srikantiah, who started the Navodaya movement in Kannada poetry was a family elder.

Noticing her inclination towards dance, in a programme at CFTRI, Mysore, Tiratharam Sharma, Kathak dancer of Jaipur "gharana" came to her house and advised her father Sri B.S.S. Rao that she should have proper training in dance. Accordingly, at the age of seven, she was taken to Delhi to become his pupil in the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, where she stayed for two years and stood first in the Pravesika certificate examination.

Late Prof. Krishnamurthy, father of the famous dancer Yamini Krishnamurthy, during his visit to Mysore advised Uma to have formal

training in Kalakshetra. Accordingly, her father took her to Madras, but found the fees prohibitive. While in Madras, Uma had the opportunity to do a cameo role in the M.G.M. movie 'Maya', produced by King Brothers and which was released in 164 countries round the world. Thespian M.G. Ramachandran who watched this little girl on the sets, was so impressed that



Uma Rao

he straightaway deposited Rs. 10,000 as fees for two years. As a result, she joined Kalakshetra.

From the third year, Rukmini Devi herself gave her a scholarship. Simultaneously, Uma joined the Besant High School for secular studies. A Union Government Scholarship and the Karnataka Sangeeth Nruthya Academy scholarship saw her through post-graduation.

Her association with Kalakshetra lasted for 22

years, as student, teacher and choreographer. She learned Bharatanatyam from Sharada Hoffman, Jayalakshmi Gopalan and Vasantha Vedam. Coaching in Abhinaya and Choreography was by Rukmini Devi herself. She participated in several dance-dramas like the five episodes from Ramayana, Usha Parinaya, Kurmavata, Dhruva Charithra, Buddha Charithra, Kannagar Koravanji, Kuchelo pakhyaana and Shakuntala.

Uma returned to her hometown Mysore in 1988 and joined the Regional College of Education under NCERT, when the Department of Dance was opened. Simultaneously, she opened the music and dance school under Sri Lalithakala Academy Trust. The Trust holds two popular festivals of Dance and Music in Mysore every year, where seasoned as well as up and coming artistes are presented. Sri B.S.S. Rao, the Executive Secretary meticulously organises these events.

Amongst her disciples in Mysore, Uma speaks high of Gowri Viswanath, Sumitha Gopal and Shyamala Gopal (Mysore Sisters), Seema Shivanna, Sumalatha and Parimala Guruswamy (Mandya Sisters), Chetan K. Hebbar and Vinod D'Souza, who have been participating both in solo and dance-drama recitals. Uma Rao has dispensed with the practice of holding "Ranga Pravesha" (Arangetram) for her disciples as she finds it unnecessarily expensive.

Uma's latest productions are: 'Thyaga Manjari' comprising six kritis of Saint Thyagaraja, choreographed on the occasion of the 150th death anniversary of the great saint

singer and "Trimurti Darshana" based on select compositions of the Trinity of Karnatak music.

During the first quarter of this year, Uma presented these items with her disciples in the Sangeetha Trimurti Vizha festival of Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai, her own Alma-mater Kalakshetra and the Natyanjali festival, Chidambaram.

One event which has given Uma immense satisfaction is when she and her students performed for 90 minutes "Thyaga Manjari" at the Sannidhi of Saint Thyagaraja in Thiruvaiyar during the morning abhisheham in December 1997. The dancers wore simple dress and flower-decked coiffures, with no flashy ornaments, in keeping with the sanctity of the venue. Probably, this was the first time any dancer had performed at Thyagaraja Sannidhi.

Uma Rao feels that only a fringe of our epics and mythologies has been touched by choreographers. She is of the firm opinion that Bharatanatyam, despite its architectonic frame-work, has

the great potential of imparting "alaukika ananda" (divine bliss) to the viewer.

When queried about awards and titles she has won, Uma's reaction was enlightening. She feels that the applause she receives from an appreciative audience is ample reward.

Even while working on the faculty of Kalakshetra, Uma had the opportunity of travelling extensively with the Kalakshetra troupe in Europe, Japan, the Philippines, Australia, Vietnam, Paris and China.

Subsequently, she worked as a teacher in the Indian Fine Arts Academy, Singapore, for four years from 1984 on Dance-Dramas. "Nala Damayanti" which she produced in 1985, featuring 45 of her students, for the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation is being telecast there even to this day. She also choreographed and presented with her students a few Ashtapadis from Jayadeva's GEETA GOVINDA during the Festival of Asian Dances in 1985. Bangalore Doordarshan has telecast the same, several times.

In 1988, the ICCR organised a six-nation tour of Indian Ocean islands, Mauritius, Madagascar, Sechelles, Comoros and Reunion, where Uma gave 32 solo recitals. Apart from the Kalakshetra dance-dramas which Rukmini Devi had graciously permitted the Trust to exhibit, Uma herself has choreographed Panchavati, Krishna Kalyana (Rukmini Kalyana episode from Pothana Bhagavatham) and Swati Tirunal's Bhavayami Raghuramam.

Today, Uma Rao is proud of having trained many artistes who are in the dance-circuits of various countries. Sangeetham Namasivayam now in Australia, Ratnakumari in Singapore, Saraswathi Mohan, a dance-teacher in Hongkong, Yumiko-Tanaka, who runs the Durga School of Dance in Osaka and Tokyo. Also her student from Kalakshetra days Angelica Sriram, who runs a dance and yoga school in Stuttgart, Germany, where she has the distinction of teaching 25 refugee children from Sri Lanka.

One of Uma's disciples Sujatha Srinivasan, now in Hong Kong, taught Bharatanatyam to a Japanese artiste Kyoko Nobi who runs her own dance institution in Tokyo, where 35 students are learning. Kyoko was in Mysore last year, when she and Uma set a Kabuki (a Japanese dance style) piece to Bharatanatyam format. In turn, Uma is now in Tokyo to develop a whole Bharatanatyam marga of select Kabuki items. Also, Uma wishes to learn a few Kabuki items.

Uma will be in Japan for one and a half months and is returning by June end.



"Seetha Kalyana Vaibhogame" by students of Uma Rao



## Tuneful Encounters-14

# To the Music Hall by Jutka

S. N. Sivaswamy

The music hall I am referring to is Shankaraiah Hall, the prestigious though unpretentious little brick construction of sloping corrugated sheet roof in Shankarapuram, looking more like a military 'Dacha' than a music hall where the Bangalore Gayana Samaja's classical music concerts reverberated, attracting listeners and connoisseurs from all over Bangalore.

That was one cultural event of the City I longed to attend when I was a student of Malleswaram High School, and later, the Intermediate and Central colleges.

For company, I had my Malleswaram friend D.S. Kumaraiah (alas, no more). He was my constant companion for attending not only music concerts, but also an occasional good film as well as other important happenings like sports events of various kinds.

Kumari (as everyone called him), and I visited this Gayana Samaja of olden days with unfailing regularity. I did not have a bicycle in my school days. Kumari had one, but double-riding was not allowed, and so we couldn't put it to use. With scanty supply of small change, all we could do was hire a jutka for the onward journey so as to be punctual for the concert which started before Rahukala, (at 4.25 p.m.)

Kumari's pocket money and my own occasional royalty (!) of five rupees from my writings just sufficed for the one way jutka trip. We stayed till the end of the concert (the concert ended around 9 p.m. which

enabled the visiting musicians to have their dinner and return by the Madras Mail) and then walked home all the way to Malleswaram, via Taragupet, Siddikatte, Arcot Sreenivasachar Road, Chickpet, Balepet, Subedar Chatram Road and Seshadripuram.

After the uncomfortable ride in the jutka, it was a relief indeed to squat in the hall and listen to the soothing music. We usually chose places near the exit so as to be able to move out in a hurry as soon as we got the signal of the conclusion from the artists, a sloka, or 'Pavamana.'

We heard memorable performances of all the musical celebrities of the day in that small hall, and I particularly recall Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Iyengar with his brusque, vigorous style, the popular Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagawatar and his strong voice, the plaintive vocal nuances of Musuri Subramanya Iyer, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer's adherence to

sruti and laya, the scintillating Kalpana swaras of Alathur Brothers, G. N. Bala subramanya Iyer's gifted voice and breathtaking 'brighas', the inimitable Madurai Mani Iyer's syrupy sweet renderings, mesmerising the whole audience, B. S. Raja Iyengar's "Jagadoddharana" and Chintanapalli Ramachandra Rao's Youthful abandon.....

Yes, we had a surfeit of great music at the Shankaraiah Hall. There were all the renowned accompanists, no less gifted than the singers, glittering the small stage. Mysore T. Chowdiah, Kumbakonam Rajamanikkam Pillai, Papa Venkataramaiah, Palghat Mani Iyer, Palani Subramanya Pillai, Tanjore Ramadas Rao. There were also instrumental solo treats by Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu, Gottuvadyam Narayana Iyengar, Palladam Sanjeeva Rao, et al.

We could have all these and more, for a mere half a rupee. Of course, the jutka hire was there to be added, less than a rupee. But the meandering music provided by the jutkawalla was free! The latter invariably turned out to be a distorted version of the famous qawwali "Mere moula bula lo Madine mujhe"

### AGENDA FOR JUNE, 1998

#### Devagiri Sangeetha Sabha

IX Main, BSK II Stage, BANGALORE-50

June 24 to June 28, daily at 6 p.m.

#### 'Mysore Musicians' Music Concerts:

June 24 : T. R. Srinath-Flute and Party.

June 25 : Mysore S. Rajalakshmi-Veena and Party

June 26 : Sukanya Prabhakar -Vocal and Party

June 27 : G. S. Kamala & G. S. Rajalakshmi-Vocal duet and Party

June 28 : Mysore M. Nagaraj & Mysore Dr. M. Manjunath-Violin duet & Party

#### Malleswaram Sangeetha Sabha

Gokhale Institute, XI Cross, Malleswaram, BANGALORE-3

June 21 : Trichur Ramachandran-Vocal and Party

# Doordarshan and Music

It is gratifying that at long last the Doordarshan, Bangalore has made way for a Music Producer. What such an officer can do in a situation where there is pretty little music on the schedule may sound ludicrous. But it is evident that the officer means business. Straightaway he has introduced a one-hour slot for music on Sunday forenoons. True, it is available only on DD-9 which is selective, restricted to those with cable net work. Music hence will remain a far cry for the general TV viewer, producer or no producer!

Which means despite its known shortcomings, the radio is the safe bet for the musically inclined. But there has been a break-through, though with the persons in authority convinced that a majority of viewers are happy without music, it is doubtful if the position vis-a-vis music would improve at all.

Here it may not be out of place to recall that before the advent of the electric media, i.e., in the pre-Independence days, leaders of public opinion used to cry hoarse that the alien rulers had mischievously pushed all our fine arts, including music aside and promoted their own art forms in their place. They ruthlessly dubbed our art forms as phillistine, out-dated and barbarous, while their own were symbols of a living culture. Till some of the archaeological discoveries revealed that our country has had a rich artistic tradition, many of our own countrymen had believed the British rulers

and even started leaning towards the change. Even today, after 50 years of independence, it can't be conclusively said that our art forms have come to their own.

Paradoxically, the electronic media under the new dispensation, especially the officialdom in the DD still seem to subscribe to the imposed theory. They are adamant and seemingly not prepared to concede that one of the aims of the media should be to educate the viewers about our rich cultural heritage. Indian classical music, like its allied art forms theatre, dance and fine arts are our most valuable inheritance. Our classical music has played an important part in promoting national integration, inspired national movements and has been the bedrock of our civilisation seeped in spiritual and ethical ideals.

True, occasionally a vocalist or an instrumentalist is billed for the TV locally. The duration, however, is barely half an hour of which the artiste is expected to give a chance to the accompanists. Which could be anywhere between eight and 10 minutes. Add the time taken away for announcement and other formalities, he is left with less than 20 minutes, hardly enough to do justice to a single number! Can there be anything more insulting to the art, the artistes and the earnest viewer?

Yet there are the other channels managed by foreign agencies which regularly allot slots for classical music on specific days, the duration often extending to beyond 90 minutes. But that again is available only to those who can afford a cable facility, the large majority left with cheap, slapstick serials. And for the ardent music lover, the radio continues to be the redeemer. And that is why much more is expected of it.

S.N. Chandrasekhar

## QUIZ

1. Name—The popular drum that is an inseparable part of Bhajans, Qawwalis, Ghazals and folk music.
2. Cymbals used for keeping 'taal' in music relating to dance and religious singing.
3. What is the name of flute in Hindustani music.
4. A seven-stringed instrument with frets and two large resonators, used in Hindustani music.
5. A fretless stringed instrument with the name of a Tamil origin.
6. An organ-like instrument introduced by Christian missionaries in India, used in accompanying both light and classical music.
7. An instrument also called "Jews, Harp" that is held in the mouth and struck with the forefinger. The 'metal tongue' vibrates to produce a sound for 'laya'.

Pick the right answers from the following list:  
Aghatti; Bansuri; Dholak; Harmonium; Accordion; Gottuvadhyam; Morsing; Tabala

# Calling Air

The present set of staff artistes of AIR, Bangalore and Mysore are decidedly resourceful, filling a wide variety of roles with ease and conviction. Most of them have made a grade with felicity both in the AIR itself and the concert stage.

**P. Ramaa** who was billed for a one-hour slot (March 18, 9.30 p.m.) is one such. Her rendition of the popular Bhairavi Varnam (Veeriboni) set the pace for a tuneful fare. Shuddha Dhanyasi (Himagirithanaye) and Purvikalyani (Gnanamosga) had little to rave about. But the alap for Shankarabharana changed the complexion. Replete with stassis-ridden 'sangatis' it was greatly impressive, spacious 'swaraprasthara' heightening the impact of the kriti Sarojadalanetri.

**M. Nagaraj** is another proud staffer, who as a violinist has made a mark both as a soloist and an accompanist. What a classic imagery of Mayamalavagoula he wove (March 20, 8.35 a.m.) in Mayateetaswarupni! His alap for Kanada (Sukhiyevvaro) made a touching impression, the delineation invested with sonorous phrasings. Yet another staffer **R. Chandrika** was on the air (March 21, 8.35 a.m.) with a pleasing Charukeshi (Adamodigalade). It was tuneful, but could not scale the emotional heights she is capable of.

**K. Varadarangan** (March 23, 8.35 a.m.) is an equally

experienced vocalist. But his singing of late appears a wee bit affected. His Kanada (Sukhiyevvaro) was true to form, but rather prosaic in effect, falling short of sensitised feeling. The articulate lyricism in the Devaranama (Kalyana-Vasanth) provided a relief.



P. Ramaa

**T. Sharada** is a senior vainika known for consistency. Her Kambodi (March 24, 8.35 a.m.) was weighty in its enunciation, expansive Thanam enriching its modal charm. Ratnakanchuka, which has almost been consigned to the attic, stood out for its structural grandeur, sustained with a flurry of lovely swara passages. **Revathi Murthy**, yet another staffer and a vainika of standing, started her recital (March 25, 9.30 p.m.) with the delectable Sri raga Varnam. It gave steady start and nothing else. Hamsanandi (Shankara Sri Guru) was more convincing at the kriti stage, the raga prelude remaining on the pedestrian level. But Ritigoula was true to its melodic

presence. Janani Ninnu, the popular kriti, glowed with some lilting phrasings.

**Vinayak Toravi** is a Hindustani vocalist whose euphonic overtones are infectious in effect. His two outings on March 26 revealed distinctly different approaches. Bhatiyar in the morning was in a sombre mood, picking up in the 'antara' to arrive at a motif which was marked for its varnished sheen. But Behag (a nocturnal melody) was luminous with glowing touches. The ease with which the "bhadat" was elucidated was proof enough to show that Vinayak has mastered the technical frills that are known to the style.

**V.N. Padmini's** Kalyani (April 1, 8.35 a.m.) was neat without being brilliant. Her rendition of the kriti Enduku Needaya was more convincing, the laya itself showing a special preference. That same night, Begade (Thyagarajaya) gave a lilting setting to **R.A. Ramamani's** recital. Her essay for the demanding melody was as dignified as the resonance in the ornate kriti. Her Thodi (Emi Jesithe) was no less impressive. Though robbed of stassis, the alap was spacious studded with some alluring 'sangatis'. The lyrical appeal in the kriti was as evocative,

Kasaravalli Sisters **Rupa Rao** and **Deepa Rao** (April 4, 9.30 a.m.) combine well to make for pleasant listening. So it was with Surati. Though no



easy meat for fledgelings, the raga was satisfying. But what lent a classic dimension was the articulated rendition of the number, Sri Venkatesha. More appealing was Nanyake Badavanu (Behag).

Likewise the Rudrapatnam Brothers **R.N. Taranathan** and **R.N. Thyagarajan** have a reputation for authenticity. The rare piece Sri Ramam in Narayanogoula (April 5, 10:10 a.m.) was a case in point. The melody gave their well planned recital an impressive start. Ramapriya (Korinavala) was as gripping in its melodic intent. Ritigoula (Badalika) revelled with graceful meanderings in the rendition, the lyrical feel in the kriti heightening its emotional fervour.

**C.R. Radha** of Kalakshetra (Madras) in her recital for the South Zone hook-up, the same night has a honed voice, revealing sound grounding in the essentials. If the Sourashtra piece on Ganapati was pleasing, Thodi (Pankajasana of Swati Tirunal) stood out for dainty vocal deployment. But it was her alap for Simhendram adhyama which really lifted the erudite quality of the recital. The alap itself was detailed, never short of subtle 'Sangatis'. The familiar Ninne Nammithi was rich in its tonal flourishes and architectonic swara korvais.

**Nagavalli Nagaraj** on the morrow was as wholesome in her artistry. Varali (Etijanmam) was memorable both for its sleek modal frame and the lyrical impact, fortifying toher claim as a mature vocalist. Academically as fulfilling was the violin recital of **A.V. Krishnamachar**, the opening



R. Chandrika

Hamsadhwani piece itself establishing his authority. The alap for Malayamaruta (Manasa Etulo) and Shuddha-Bangala was as reposeful. But it was Tholinejesini in the latter that excelled in its lyrical outline. Its lingering feel was inescapable.

**H.S. Rajalakshmi** of Mysore (April 7) is as good a teacher as she is a consistent performer. After a near jerky Hamsanada (Bantureeti), she settled down to a classic essay of Mohana (Bhavanuta). It was a reassuring recital. **T.S. Rama's** Charukeshi (Jayajaya Padmanabha) on the morrow

testified as emphatically to an authentic status. Especially wholesome was her raga essay.

The Hidustani vocal by **M.R. Gautham** (April 9, 10.30 p.m.) was noted for its modulated tonality. Though betraying some strain in the voice, especially in the upper reaches, the weighty rag Koushi-Kanada unfolded a variety of thaans, testifying to his mastery over the idiom. Viswanath Nakod on the tabala was as sure of his layakari.

**Padma Gurudutt's** Raga Darshini for Shanmukhapriya (April 10) was a studied treat. If her introduction to the stately melody, covering an entire album of compositions was scholarly, her illustration from the renderings of well-known veterans was exhaustive, of real archival dimensions. **R.K. Srikantan's** Sangeeta Samrajya on the morrow was as educative. The academic importance of the life and works of masters like Subbarama Dikshitar, Natesha Pillai and Walajapet Venkatarmana Bhagawatar can never be over emphasised. The programme gave an insight into some valuable information.

ESSENCE

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## Face to Face

# *He couldn't run away from Art*

Pramila Lochan

**T**ejendra Singh Baoni was 16 years when he ran away from his foundation course at Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan. His only desire at the time was to appear for the Indian Administrative Service exam and study further. Being an artist to him seemed unexciting as he had grown up in an environment of art at home.

"Everyone at home was an artist. I wanted to diversify and the administrative services appealed to me. But my father felt that being an artist was the best and most respectable profession. He also wanted me to absorb the ideals of Santiniketan for which he had great admiration."

After much counselling, Baoni retraced his steps to Kala Bhavan and chose architectonic sculpture as his specialised medium of expression. He stayed on to complete his post-graduate degree.



General Thimmiah (bronze)

His inspired decision to study sculpture, once again connects to his father's influence upon him as a child. "I used to watch my father work on portraits of Maharajas and I used to help him mix clay. Although it interested me, I never thought I'd take it up professionally. Infact, all our forefathers were court painters and my father was the last of a generation of traditional painters. He was a good photographer, sculptor and skillfully painted portraits of kings and queens on ivory. Indeed, I have learnt more about portrait study from my father than at Santiniketan."

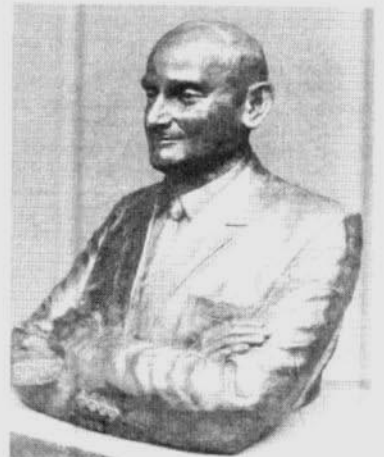
Today it seems like Baoni is here to stay put in Bangalore. A quiet, spectacled, intense artist, he can be found working in his studio. A studio that one finds tucked in a remote corner after passing by the landscaped contours of Chitrakala Parishath.

As Head of the Sculpture Department, Chitrakala Institute of Advanced Studies, he has effectively merged his artistic talent, his childhood desire for administration and teaching, at this institute.

As a student in Santiniketan, Baoni had been greatly sensitised by the works of Ram Kinkar Baij and Rodin. The spirit and style of their works left a considerable impression on him. In his own words, "we find a visual interpretation that translates into bold, direct and forceful

emotion."

Consistently growing in number, over the past 10 years, his creations can be found in many public and private collections such as H.M.T., K.P.C., B.M. Birla Science Center-Hyderabad, McDowell & Co. Ltd, Lalit Kala Academy Madras, Chitrakala Parishath, Sculptor House Pvt. Ltd., Olympia, London and many more. He has also participated in several solo and group exhibitions in India and abroad.



Portrait G.P. Birla (bronze)

In all his handwork one can sense his fascination for bronze remains a strong motivating force. As he expresses, "I find bronze rich, sophisticated and although expensive, I love working with its melting and organic qualities" Portraiture for Baoni 'is like a sketch'. He imbibes the character and inner qualities of a model. His



Madakarinyaka on horse back installed in 1997 in Chitradurga

expressed directly through my hands."

On the other hand a more recent work, 'The King on horseback' took more than two years to complete. Commissioned by the Government of Karnataka, it was installed at Chitradurga in 1997. A monumental delight, the 16 feet high horse stands stately and tall on a pedestal with Madakarinyaka astride.

I still remember Baoni working out each detail in great length and thought. Days when he sat for hours, trying to derive technical solutions. All the same he adds, "this experience was a first of its kind and highly enjoyable though extremely challenging both mentally and physically."

Recently on a Charles Wallace Trust Fellowship, Baoni was able to travel, teach, exhibit and work across Europe. "The experience taught me a lot. I realized any object could be converted into a work of art. I enjoyed doing a lot of experimental work

away from only the conventional methods."

The exposure, for sure, has allowed Baoni to progress from conventional practises in teaching to a method that entails greater freedom. Even while teaching the post-graduate students, he believes in giving them the choice to play with material. Anything from sand, leaf, machine, paper, stone or wood can exercise freedom of expression.

Teaching itself is an art and for Baoni, it is another extension of enjoyment in work. As he says, "interaction with fresh minds leads to new ideas. Unless a free hand is given, students cannot develop their own language and become innovative."

Art, according to Baoni, "is a reflection of society and shows the progress of culture. It is our duty to mirror our present living as artists and that's what I teach my students. The need to progress from conventional figurative work to a more personalised form of creativity."

dexterity and quickness can be observed as the image is sculpted in clay, sometimes in two hours flat. Casting is done later.

Averse to using tools, Baoni prefers to use his hands directly while sculpting. He feels, "by using tools, the softness is lost and the whole process becomes an indirect one."

In his work named 'The Sculptor', textural variations have been created purely by finger impressions and by using the edge of the palm. "I enjoy this tactile experience where my feelings are

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## Dances Galore in Vasantotsava

The focus in the annual Vasantotsava of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan this year was on Geeta Govinda, poet Jayadeva's classic. The three-day spring festival unfolded the romantic intent in the Ashtapadis through a variety of media from vocal music to audio-visual feature and dance recitals.

The festival itself was in two parts, the mornings devoted to academic discussions, while the evenings were reserved for entertainment. It included "Chitra Raag", an audio-visual experiment of Shyamala G. Bhawe, an Odissi fare by Surupa Sen of Nrityagram, a Manipuri dance by Meitei Jogol from Calcutta and a Bharathanatyam recital by Lalitha Srinivasan of Nupura.

As the title suggests, Chitra Raag is a combination of music and painting, Shyamala trying to interpret

some select verses through a slide show. The experiment gave the festival a meaningful, but sedate start. While her voice betrayed some strain, the slides were not sharp enough to make an impact.

Surupa, disciple of the reputed Odissi exponent Protima Gauri undoubtedly was the pick of the fare. Though her torso movements fell short in meeting the demands of the style, the 'chalis' were lively and 'bhangis' neat. Like her guru, Surupa's Abhinaya is wholesome, the three Ashtapadis exemplifying the different Nayikas stand out for their eloquent 'drishti' and well-wrought 'hasthas'.

The Manipuri group with its distinct accoutrements and graceful movements made as sensitive an appeal. The mainstay in the style is its languorous 'angikas', the body itself construed as a vehicle of expression. While this approach has its relevance in a group choreography like the "Rasa Leela", it falls short of conviction in portraying emotion-filled 'Rasas' like Vasikasajja underlined in the famous "Pashyati Dish Dish", the Ashyapadi which found favour with all the performers.

"Sringara Nayika" as conceived by Lalitha Srinivasan is a tested piece, one of the favourites of the Bharathanatyam exponent. Though her portrayal for the different Nayikas had its depth, her rigid 'angikas' seemingly robbed of its visual richness.

Rajashree Kamath who presented a Bharathanatyam recital at the same venue is also a student of Nupura. Even as she ran through the invocatory pieces a lively presence emerged, a lovely pair of eyes and rechika-filled 'angikas' enhancing her dancery potential.

It was the very same attributes that lent credibility to the soulful "Sami Ninne Kori", the 'ragamalika' Varna. Though the 'adavus' lacked variety, a taut thattu-mattu coupled with supple 'angikas' were compensating. Nor could her 'sama pada' and 'are-mandi' be faulted.



Nirupama Rajendra



Rajashree Kamath

Rajashree's Abhinaya revealed a depth which is above average, the Virahotkhandita in the Varnam being as convincing as the more demanding Khandita later in "Pokaritanamu" (ragamalika). But the Parakiya Nayika in "Bottu Kattinavadu" (Bhairavi) appeared not only challenging, but beyond her reach. Overall, for sure she is full of promise and should easily make a grade soon.



Shoba Sanjay

The one artiste who evokes instant pleasure is Nirupama Rajendra, her progress ever on the upward. For one who divides her loyalty between Bharathanatyam and Kathak, tinkling her bells with those of her life partner Rajendra in the latter, it is remarkable how she manages to keep their identities apart. This is not confined to 'aharya', but is manifest in her very approach.

\* \* \*

## ABHINAVA

Around the same time, at the ADA auditorium for Abhinava, founded by the young dance couple, she appeared in a Bharathanatyam recital. The glitter in her style surfaced right through the invocatory pieces propitiating Surya (Malahari) and Ganesha (Nata), an array of Charis and Sthanakas unveiling their distinct identities. Either, nor even the ode to the mother goddess had any scope for facials, though the elegance in her stance was unmistakable.

Nirupama's varnam for the day was "Nee Inda Mayai" (Dhanyasi). Though the emphasis appeared to be Abhinaya, the Nritya was so neat and so sparkling that it could do proud as much to her own discipline as to her Guru Narmada. If the 'adavus' in the spacious 'korvais' glowed with a rich tapestry of 'angikas', the Virahotkhandita Nayika came alive in all intensity in the sleek 'sancharis'. Even so, one felt that her portrayal could do with a greater proportion of flexions and 'rechikas'.

But her Abhinaya is mature, her trained 'drishti' adding to the sense of involvement. They (drishtis) had their full play in the portrayal for 'Chudare', exemplifying the Abhisarika. The varying glances heightened the 'disparate rasas' as the denouement winded through anxiety, anticipation and the ultimate prospect of beholding her lord. But Nirupama's display of 'bhakti' enunciated in the 'devaranam' that followed bordered on the pedestrian, falling short in conviction.

## KATHAK

The Every Friday fare about the same period featured a Kathak recital by B.M.



Murali Mohan—Kathak



Anjali Attavar

Nagaraj of Mysore and the local Suparna Venkatesh. Both are students of Maya Rao and both experienced dancers, the invocatory 'Jaya Ganesha' vouching for it. The 'Thaat' that followed glowed with a variety of 'thodas'. But the foray had to sustain entirely on the trite laya. Neither their stance nor the 'angikas' could answer the demands of aesthetics. Nor could their staid face evoke any sense of joy to make the presentation appear lively.

The only piece that enlivened the recital was Holi, the prankish spraying of 'gulal' on each other lending it a sense of involvement. But even here the facials were subdued, an artificial smile reducing it to farce.

But in individual numbers the duo appeared more convincing. Nagaraj's portrayal for 'Pashupatinatha' revealed a variety of Sthanakas to depict the personality of Shiva. His uninhibited movements were lively, executing as he did some complex 'layakari'. Suparna also appeared more at ease as she delineated the Abhinaya for the Ashtapadi Chandana Charchita. Though her facials betrayed a steady a thess,



Suparna's stance and the 'angikas' definitely surpassed the average.

Murali Mohan, another Kathak dancer has the same credentials. The taut laya and spacious movements in the "Ganesha Stuthi" testified to it. But as a composition it betrayed lack of imagination, the repeated 'Pathaka' Has has inexplicably covering his minimal facials. It verily made the uninitiated doubt if the style could boast of any other Hastha at all. Nor was his self-



B.M. Nagaraj, Suparna Venkatesh—Kathak



Smitha Iyengar

praise in the dreary introduction in good taste.

The city witnessed two "Ranga Praveshas" in the interval. For Shoba Sanjay (nee Ramaswamy), a softwear engineer, it was as much a farewell performance, as marriage will presently see her in the US. Though in the line for over 10 years under Radha Sridhar, Shoba was seemingly not sure of the finer points of the art. Her 'anga-shuddham' was not free from rough edges, though the 'are-mandi' was in place as evidenced in the familiar Huseni Varnam. A steady laya heightened its 'theermanams', the Ri-Ri-Ri foray in the 'ethukade' adding a touch of elegance.

But neither the Varnam nor the simple Abhinaya pieces, including "Kopavidetake" (Antahpura Geethe) could carry conviction, her 'drishti' especially lacking in depth.

Anjali Attavar of Madras was the other aspirant, to make a bow in the Ravindra Kalakshetra a little earlier. Student of Udupi

Lakshminarayana, Anjali has a confident presence, a glistening pair of eyes her main asset. This feature came to the fore in the familiar repertoire.

But though the Jathi pattern throughout was rich, the corresponding 'adavus' could hardly match its brilliance, broad food movements rather than cultivated beats exemplifying the 'theermanams'. Anjali's Abhinaya certainly testifies to a more cultivated approach, though the emphasis was more on Bhakti than to do much with the multi-faceted Sringara. She has to direct her attention to this vital aspect if her portrayal has to gain substance.

Another Bharathanatyam aspirant who figured in a City art festival of Kala Sambhrama was Smitha Iyengar who made her bow more than a year ago. Now under Bhanumathi, Smitha has shown promise of making a grade in the near future.

—Atreya

# On the Pedestal of Hindustani Music

Chandrasekhar

To assess the achievements of an artiste, be it a musician, or a dancer, or even a painter, his performance record is as important a factor as the number of disciples he has nurtured.

In this perspective, Gayanacharya Gururao Deshpande stands on solid soil, the late Hindustani vocalist's contribution on both counts being far-reaching, and enduring and enviable.

But there is one other factor without which all these attributes might go unnoticed. And that is a machinery to not only document such achievements, but also see that they are made known to succeeding generations. It is to serve such a purpose that institutions like Shantiniketan, the Mahabodhi Society, the Aurobindo Ashram and the numerous Maths have come into existence. The Tansen Samaroh, Thyagaraja Aradhana Samithi, Sawai Gandharva Samithi and the like are with similar aims. Behind each one of these institutions can be traced a dedicated individual's, mostly a disciple's, concerted efforts.

Fortunately for the Gayanacharya and to Hindustani music, he has such a dedicated disciple in Vinayak Torvi who is himself an accomplished vocalist. To start with he set up the Gururao Deshpande Punyasmarane

Samithi. Initially, its function was to pay homage to the late maestro on his death anniversary through music recitals. The annual feature gained popularity just as more and more recognised artistes started associating themselves with the event.

Since shifting its locale from Hubli to Bangalore a decade ago, it started including a concert in the Carnatic style too, to add to the variety. Lately, a Yuva Mahotsava to promote talent among the younger aspirants has added another dimension to the Samithi.

In either case, the response to the all-night concerts has become so overwhelming that it has necessitated the shifting of the venue year after year to a larger auditorium. More importantly, the name of the master has been placed on a high pedestal and his name has become immortal.

Whether as a producer of Music in AIR, Dharwar, or as

a consistent senior vocalist of his time, his singing was listened to by musicians of all strains and music-lovers of all climes with utmost respect, known as Gururao was for his originality and a chaste style tinged with emotional fervour. It was wellknown that the maestro was a votary of the Gwalior "gharana." But like most artistes of his generation, perhaps with the notable exception of Gangubai Hangal, Gururao's style was eclectic in its perception, verily transcending the confines of the "gharana" concept. Like Mallikarjun Mansur who was his contemporary and Bhimsen Joshi and Basavaraj Rajguru who were his juniors in age, the Gayanacharya had honed a distinct style by integrating and assimilating the best in more than one "gharana". Its sheer brilliance had won him admirers in all such variations.

It is no secret that leading vocalists of the Hindustani realm had come under the spell of a wholesome approach, enriching the form by blending the best aspects of disparate traditions. What they aimed at was a monolithic cohesion of design with a universal appeal. Gayanacharya was at the vanguard of such a movement.



Inaugural concert of the Samithi by Dr. Gangubai Hangal



Pt. Bhimsen Joshi Performing at the 10th Anniversary of Guru Rao Deshpande

The fact that a hot favourite of the day like Bhimsen Joshi had not only condescended to lend vocal support to the veteran in his meifils, but took a leading part in organising his Shashtyabdi Poorti (60th birthday) celebrations at Pune should give an idea of the magnitude of his influence on his contemporaries.

### Persistent Riyaz

Gururao was born in 1899 in an illustrious family with roots in art and literature. Narayan Rao and Gangabai, his parents, were discerning lovers of music. But like most of their ilk at the time, they were aspiring for a career in law for their son. They soon realised that this was a far cry, seeing that Gururao was increasingly attracted to music and his dulcet voice had an irresistible appeal in it. They

had no alternative than to endorse his passion for music. The lad was barely 10 years of age when he started his first lessons under Dattopant Joshi and later T.K. Pitre. His singing was further honed by Ramakrishna Buwa Wazhe, one of the leading lights of the Gwalior "gharana."

But Gururao was no fanatic. He had an open mind and delighted in listening to the other stalwarts of the day like Ustad Abdul Karim Khan, Sawai Gandharva, Faiyaz Khan, Manji Khan and others. Listening to such giants and performing in their presence was an education for Gururao who at the same time enriched his musical knowledge.

Gururao's singing was known for its ease and melodic grace, evidence of the influence of Karim Khan and Sawai Gandharva. Even to his last days, in his eighties, his voice had retained its euphonic power, testifying to his persistent 'riyas'.

His colleagues and contemporaries remember Gururao as a simple, sympathetic human, sensitive to the feelings of others. He was a disciplinarian and a stickler to punctuality.

Besides being an accomplished vocalist and reputed guru, the veteran had distinguished himself on the stage too, having honed his skill to perfection in 'natya sangeet'. He was also well versed in Gamaka, the Hubli Gamaki conference having conferred the coveted "Gamaka Gauri Shankara" title on him. He was also a composer of repute.

Gururao took the honours and recognitions showered on

him in his stride. The best tribute to his genius is the title of 'Gayanacharya,' conferred at the 24th Punya Smarane Music Festival in honour of Sawai Gandharva at Kundagol. The State Sangeet-Nritya-Academy honoured itself by honouring him in 1971.

The maestro passed away in 1982, at the ripe old age of 83 and leaving a rich legacy behind. The torch-bearers of that hallowed legacy is in the hands of his disciples like B.N. Lonakadi, Narayanarao Mazumdar, Lata Nadgir, and last but not the least, Vinayak Torvi. The last-named has not only graduated to the national level as a worthy student of the master, but perpetuated his memory through the well-organised and widely acclaimed Gururao Deshpande Punya Smarane Samithi, a fitting tribute to a Guru who had given so much to music!

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# Veena Seminar : Unique in many ways

The Veena with all its ramifications was in focus in a seminar-cum-festival in the City in late March. The unique three-day event was organised by Tarangini Arts Foundation and was held at the National Institute of Advanced Studies.

The first of its kind, the two-fold meet brought together musicians, scientists, electronic specialists, veena-makers besides vainikas from the five concerned States of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. By itself a formidable feat.

While wide-ranging discussions on academic and technical aspects of the divine instrument marked the morning sessions, the evenings allowed the delegates to relax and settle down to veena recitals by some of the top

Rukmini Krishnan names in the country, including a Chitra-Veena (Gottuvadyam) concert by the well-known Ravi Kiran.

Dr. M.R. Gautham, the well-known Hindustani vocalist, who inaugurated the festival, traced the history of the Veena or the Been as it was known earlier, to the Vedic period. Dr. Karaikkudi N. Subramaniam, Professor, Department of Music, University of Madras, explained the status of Saraswati Veena in its present form. He recalled the different interpretations of the various parts of the divine instrument and their symbolic references. As a musical instrument, he said, veena is complete with 'sruti' and 'laya' as parts of its structure. Its sound is closest to the human voice, the vocal 'gamakas' realised through the combination of finger, sliding and pulling techniques.

In the interaction with veena makers, trends in the manufacture of the instrument to overcome the shortage of the specific wood were considered. While Surya Rao a traditional veena-maker of Bobbili, explained how the contour of the veena in the olden days when it was held slantingly was differed from the one in use today, Palaniappan of Tanjore explained the salient features of the detachable veena in which he specialises. He suggested a veena fitted with Nagapasam which he has developed with the help of Dr. Subramaniam, for finer tuning. A Veerabhadraiah of Bangalore displayed a fibre-glass reinforced veena with frets fixed on wax. Narasimha Rao, another Bangalorean, displayed a highly-decorated detachable veena.

Rajnaraian, a well-known musician-cum-electronic engineer who has invented a series of electronic musical instruments, said that a time had come when musicians, scientists, and electronic engineers acted as a team to generate a new wave of classical music system. He disclosed that the electronic veena, as conceived, would overcome many problems listed earlier by Radhika Rajnaraian. They related to control of volume of sound, continuity of tone, temperature that may affect waxfrets, tuning mechanism, besides adjustment of contact mike and magnetic pick-ups. Moreover, the instrument can be disassembled, each part put in a separate box.

During the discussion, Lewis of Lewis and Sons demonstrated another electronic veena, which could also be assembled and



Dr. N R. Gautam, Dr. Suma Sudhindra, Sri B.V.K. Shastry and Dr. Raja Ramanna at the inaugural



Demonstration of Bobbli Veena by VAK Ranga Rao, Surya Rao, Veena Maker from Bobbli and Suma Sudhindra the Director of Tarangini Arts

disassembled easily. But the overall reaction of musicians in general and vainikas in particular was that the electronic veena could never replace the Saraswati veena which was not only sacred but the sound had a resonance which is unmatched.

Sanjay Mudartha who opined that the acoustics in our concert halls left much to be desired, recommended the use of the superior, Piezo electric contact mike. Those pick-ups were sensitive to vibrations. He also stressed the need for a proper feedback, a primary amplification system positioned near the artiste ful-filling the requirement. Prof. Rajaram Nityananda explained the fundamentals of frequency, wave forms, wave propagation characteristics, filtration, sound mixture, etc. He explained what differentiated noise from the sound of music.

Dr. Padmanabhan, the Director of the Indian Institute of Science and himself a trained vocalist, disclosed that v'luminous R & D work had been done on heat transfer and that could be applied for sound as well.

Almost all the organisers from V. Shankar of Shanmukhananda Sangeeta Sabha, Mumbai, to

Krishnamurthy of Surya, Trivandrum, Maitreyi of Music Academy, Madras, Mysore Subramanya of Karnataka Ganakala Parishath and H. Kamalanath of Bangalore Gayana Samaja, were not happy with the prospects for the veena concerts in the future. B.R.C. Iyengar opined that in the face of stiff competition posed by the Mandolin and Saxophone, "the future of the Veena is bleak."

Dr. Raja Ramanna in his valedictory address described the seminar as different from many others from the angle of audience participation, quality of interactions and objective presentations. He said it was an eye-opener in many respects, the question-answer sessions revealing the keen understanding of the several points raised during the discussions. B.V.K. Sastry who summed up described the seminar as a resounding success.

After viewing the Seminar in its totality, some of the ideas that occurred to make Veena more functional in the positive development of Karnatak music were :

1. A change in the mind set of both performers and listener. They should remind themselves that notwithstanding the sacred

aura surrounding it, the primary function of a Veena is to act as an excellent medium for expressing ones musical ideas perfectly. Improvements and Changes if any should be made keeping this aspect in view.

2. The improvements that were felt necessary were in respect of the structure, the raw material used, the fixative for the mela or frets; production of sound from the instrument.

3. Because of the bulk, the Veena often poses problems for the performer on a tour. Structural alterations to reduce the size without affecting the sound should be examined.

4. Raw materials like the Jackwood are in use from a long time, but their sources are dwindling. It is necessary to put the Jackwood under scientific test to understand its special qualities which suit the veena and also explore alternative source for the manufacture of Veena, the use of synthetic medium not ruled out.

In brief, Music being a science besides being an art, a scientific approach in the manufacture of Veena and in handling the instrument as a perfect medium of musical expression should be encouraged.

### May QUIZ Answeres :

1. Patiala
2. Kirana
3. Jaipur
4. Agra
5. Gwalior



## READERS FORM



Sir,

It is with utmost shock and regret that I learnt the untimely demise of N. Sundar Raj. I knew Sundar Raj and his family for more than two decades. In fact I was residing with my parents, opposite to his house at Gandhinagar long ago. Many of your readers might know that late N. Srinivasan, Prop. of Lakshmi Jewellery, Nagarthpet was Sundaraj's brother and he was also an amateur photographer and was a familiar figure at Ramaseva Mandali with his camera.

My condolences to the bereaved family.

**B. Visweswara Rao, Bangalore.**

Sir,

Received April and May issues of Phoenix. I am glad the magazine has been resurrected. Certainly it is more eye-catching now because of the colourful pictures. I wish all good luck to the Phoenix folks.

**Ms. Kusuma Rao, Bangalore**

My dear SNC,

Many thanks for the copy of the "Phoenix" April-98. You have given a re-birth to the memory of your dear friend Mr. Sundaraj who richly deserves the same.

The issue has come out very well & I hope it would continue to be like this with comprehensive coverage of Karnataka cultural centres and Artists instead of a single window for the capital.

I shall do my best within my limitations whatever service you need from us.

**B.S.S. Rao, Mysore**

Sir,

Your editorial in April '98 issue provides your subscribers with details of the teething

troubles the journal had undergone. But like the mythical bird Phoenix, the journal is also only one of the kind from the Garden City on music and dance and has come out with renewed youth to live with added lustre. It is quite amazing that the journal took on the name, the mythical bird was credited with!!

Readers of your journal will be happy to know that Nritya Gitanjali, a work by Veena Sesha Aiyar, a prominent retired engineer-musician-composer, had been released by the president of the Music Academy, Chennai amidst a galaxy of danseuses including Smt. Vijayantimala and others. The author-composer has presented four lofty volumes beautifully got up with full notations. Several of his songs are danced by artistes of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, etc. and the present output in Sanskrit, Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, etc provides the fullest scope for full-scale performances as he has covered the full gamut of dance-forms of Bharatanatyam.

**N. Rajagopalan, Chennai**

The two living legends so charmingly photographed on the cover page of Phoenix April 1998, made me feel their living presence before me.

**H.N. Rajanna, Bhadravathi**

Dear Sri Chandrashekar,

I am very happy to learn from Sri. B.S.S. Rao that "PHOENIX" has been resurrected. This was very necessary to project the abundant talent available in Karnataka so that they get due publicity especially after our state Sangeetha Nruthya Academy instead of improving their distribution policy, took the retragrade step of closing down the publication of "Naada Nrutya".

Kindly let me know if I can be of any help. Also, please send details so that I can send the subscription for Phoenix.

**K. Raghavendra Rao, Mysore**



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